

## San Carlos Farmer's Market

There is a sweetness in the air at the San Carlos Farmer's Market, and it is not just the fresh kettle corn. It's more idyllic, a symphony of senses: the warmth of morning sunshine, the aromas of ripe produce and just-baked pastries. Happy chatter between neighbors weaves with the buzz of scooter wheels bumping along the sidewalk, fueled by tiny feet. The soundtrack is made complete with live music floating from the park.

This hum of humanity fills Laurel Street in downtown San Carlos every Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Chamber of Commerce CEO David Bouchard explains that the market, now in its thirteenth year, was created to "make downtown San Carlos a year-round destination for shopping, eating, and socializing through familiarization." Judging by the crowds that swarm the main strip of town, popping in and out of the market stalls, restaurants and shops in the 700 block of Laurel Street, it's easy to call the venture a success.

There is more to the market than meets the eye, though. Behind the scenes is a flurry of coordination—mapping out vendors, scheduling local musicians, balloon artists and face painters. And therein lies yet another motivation. The farmer's market not only cultivates community, it shines a spotlight on local food artisans—the farmers, the coffee roasters and bakers, the fisherman and cheesemongers. These are the players who take the stage each Sunday, highlighting their craft and celebrating the agricultural offerings of the Bay Area and greater Golden State.

With so many vendors to visit, it's a paradox of choice for shoppers. It's harder yet to appreciate all that goes into creating the picturesque Sunday market. It's impossible in this space to introduce each of the small food purveyors, but here are



just three of the regulars who make the San Carlos Farmer's Market such a popular shopping destination.

**Dalex** Flaky, blueberry piroshkis, spicy sausage and a rich artichoke dip—this is just a sampling of the made-from-scratch Polish foods the San Carlos-based company called Dalex serves. Dimitry and Valentina Zernitzky, who founded the company in South San Francisco in 1992, use recipes and culinary skills passed down through Valentina's family to create sausages, sweet and savory piroshkis, and the myriad dips that celebrate their Polish heritage. The permit and paperwork process and product preparation for the farmer's market aren't simple, Dimitry observed, "but overall it's very fun and rewarding."

**Flour Chylde Bakery** Who needs gluten when the indulgences of a rich, mousse-like chocolate torte, freshly-baked cookies and crunchy granola are just a pastry bag away? That's the idea at Flour Chylde Bakery, which offers a cornucopia of gluten-free treats, including mixes for home baking. Based out of Novato, the bakery is the brainchild of Catherine Bragg-Brennan and her husband and head baker, Dion Brennan. He explained their mission: "Our standard is for those who want or need gluten-free, we've got you covered. If you don't, our food still tastes great!"

A good place to start is the Pure Chocolate Torte, but for something citrusy, try either the Lemon Coconut or Rustic Orange Tortes. The brightness in flavors is sure to tantalize.

**J&J Ramos Farms** Welcome to stone-fruit heaven, and with samples galore, this is a place to dive head first into the season's offerings of juicy peaches, nectarines, apricots, and more. Presenting that early-morning cornucopia to San Carlos foodies means a crack-of-dawn start from the family-owned operation in Hughson, an agricultural community southeast of Modesto. "It's a process!" declared Mireya Ramos, who owns the farm with husband Jorge. "We load up our trucks the day before and the day of. We're up at 3:00 a.m. to leave by 4:00 a.m." But it's not the early wake-up call that weighs on their minds; it's the safety of their employees. "We attend 18 farmer's markets, so it's all about making sure our drivers are safe in those early mornings," she added.

Running a family business is also all about balance and finding joy in the small moments. "For our kids it's great to be with dad -- on the tractor, loading the truck, at the market. It's all about the little things, being able to spend time together, especially in the summer when there's not a lot of time as a family." Mireya shared that her favorite part of farmer's markets is the customers. "It's great getting to talk with people. We've been very lucky to have returning customers, so you grow a friendship with people. It doesn't feel like work."

*Congratulations to our food writer, Emily Mangini, on the birth of her daughter.*  
—Ed.